

Strengthening meteorological, hydrological services in Africa

An initiative to support the modernisation and strengthening of sub-Saharan African meteorological and hydrological services has been launched on 2 June in Geneva, Switzerland.



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This is an initiative by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), African Development Bank and World Bank Group. The meteorological and hydrological services are key to strengthening resilience to extreme weather events and enabling economic development.

Entitled 'Strengthening Climate and Disaster Resilience in sub-Saharan Africa', this initiative is a direct response to the anticipated adverse impacts from climate change, including food insecurity, which pose severe risks to growth and development across the region.

"Reliable and real-time weather and climate information is a prerequisite for multiple sectors of the economy, including water, agriculture, transport, energy and public health," said Makhtar Diop, the World Bank vice-president for the Africa Region. "Increasing the accuracy of weather forecasts will save lives and livelihoods. We are committed to working together to improve these services in sub-Saharan Africa."

Inadequate infrastructure

Most meteorological and hydrological service providers in sub-Saharan Africa are unable to meet users' current needs for weather and climate information. Also, corresponding infrastructure is inadequate. A recent WMO survey showed that 54% of the surface and 71% of the upper air weather stations in the region did not report data. In addition, there is limited and often fragmented funding from development partners. The need for a larger, sustainable system architecture inspired the WMO, African Development Bank, and World Bank Group to join forces.

"This is a timely and highly needed initiative. With the help of all our partners and member countries, we are committed to bring cutting-edge advancements and experience from around the globe to sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, it builds on existing cooperation and is fully aligned with the Global Framework for Climate Services and the African Ministerial Conference on Meteorology - Integrated Strategy on Meteorology," said Michel Jarraud, Secretary-General of the WMO.

The initiative is based on several guiding principles such as improving the capacity of National Meteorological and Hydrological Services and their regional support centres to access global climate data and global models. This includes improved early warning and forecasting to help prevent damage and loss of life from catastrophic events. Partnerships and coordination among existing services would also be strengthened through information sharing among agencies and advising on improving legal and regulatory frameworks.

Facilitating coordination

The initiative will facilitate coordination and leveraging of financing from various sources of development and climate finance. The initial phase will focus on 15 countries and four regional centres. The initiative also addresses how the modernisation and strengthening of hydro-meteorological services remains a high priority of the region.

"As the premier African development institution, the African Development Bank is happy to join forces with the World Bank Group and WMO in this transformative initiative," said Aly Abou-Sabaa, vice-president of the African Development Bank. "If done right, this initiative will give a major boost to economic as well as human development indices in sub-Saharan African, leading to economic growth and development."

The expected results of the initiative include the widespread availability of timely and reliable forecasts at the regional, national and local levels, leading to a reduction in the impacts of weather and climate extremes on people and property. Additional results include improved weather, climate and hydrological services delivered to citizens and weather-dependent sectors and improved international and cross-border collaboration on drought, severe weather and flood warnings.

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